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Opinion

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Around Town

Family of Mary Phagan protests marker change

Without a formal vote and with the press absent, Marietta City Council has changed the inscription on the city's historic marker at the grave of rape-murder victim **Mary Phagan** in the Marietta City Cemetery. The Phagan family is blaming Councilman **Philip Goldstein**.



Mary Phagan

The descendants of Miss Phagan are upset because the family was not notified before or after the change, and only learned of it on a cemetery-cleaning visit. The family says the newly-placed marker — which sits on a city-

maintained path near the grave and is not to be confused with Miss Phagan's ornate tombstone, which makes no mention of the circumstances of her death — omits the reason for the 1986 posthumous pardon given **Leo Frank**.

Frank — Miss Phagan's boss — was convicted in 1913 by a Fulton Superior Court jury of the 13-year-old girl's murder in an Atlanta pencil factory and sentenced to hang. When Gov. **John Slaton** commuted Frank's sentence to life in 1915, a group of Marietta men abducted Frank from the state prison near Milledgeville and lynched him near what is now the Big Chicken on Frey's Gin Road in Marietta.

The Phagan family initially opposed placing a marker at their ancestor's grave, fearing there would be increased damage to the cemetery plot and curiosity seekers would leave graffiti. That hasn't happened.

Late Mayor **Joe Mack Wilson** told east Cobb resident and Cherokee County special education teacher **Mary Phagan Keen**, a great-niece of Mary Phagan, that the grave was the most sought by visitors to Marietta and should have a marker, along with several other notable graves in the cemetery.

Mayor Wilson told the Phagan family the city would let them approve the text of the marker. The family insisted the unusual conditions of Frank's 1986 pardon be explained. That was done. Now controversy has arisen because that portion of the marker has been changed.

The Georgia Pardons and Parole Board in 1983 turned down a request for a pardon based on Frank's alleged innocence. Frank's former office boy, **Alonzo Mann**, told two *Nashville Tennessean* newsmen he saw black janitor **Jim Conley** holding a limp body in his arms the day of the murder. In its 1983 denial of a

East Cobb GOP activist **Sharon Cooper** soon will become the fourth candidate seeking the seat of state Rep. **Lynda Coker**, R-east Cobb, who won't seek re-election.

Mrs. Cooper has hired as her political consultant ex-Arizona state Rep. **Pat Wilder**, wife of former state Rep. **Tom Wilder**, R-east Cobb.

Mrs. Cooper is a registered nurse, a former nursing professor and a member of Speaker Gingrich's Medicare Task Force. Her husband is noted Bariatrician Dr. **Tom Cooper**, known as "the diet doctor." She is author of "Taxpayers' Tea Party." Others seeking Rep. Coker's job are Cobb School Board member **Carolyn Duncan**, AT&T exec **Phil Atwood** and former Cobb GOP party veep and paralegal **Jim Serrate**.



Sharon Cooper

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POLITICAL PATTERN: Former state Sen. **Johnny Isakson**, R-east Cobb, will kickoff his campaign for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sen. **Sam Nunn**, D-Perry, at a reception Tuesday at Cobb Galleria Centre from 5 to 8 p.m. ... East Cobb lawyer **Jason Hasty**, one of four candidates seeking Isakson's state senate vacancy, will hold a fundraiser Monday at 7 p.m. at K.C. Rib Company. Tickets sell for \$21 at the door. Other candidates are east Cobb lawyer **Bill Venema**, Realtor **Robert Lamutt** and printing firm owner **Ernie Norsworthy**.

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THIS AND THAT: If you want to sneak-a-peak at the new Marietta Museum on the second floor of the historic Kennesaw House it'll be open to the public today from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the Marietta Pilgrimage: A Christmas Tour of Homes. ... Retired City of Marietta Parks and Recreation director **Ron Ransom** will give a carving demonstration Tuesday from 7 to 9 p.m. at the new Barnes and Noble bookstore at Town Center Mall. ... Roswell City Council last week voted to name the city trail system after Councilman **Don White** and also the new fire station the "Don White Fire Station." White, who died last month, retired from the City of Marietta in 1992 after being public works director for 30 years.

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If you think Southern League of Baseball President **Arnie Fielkow** is just about baseball, you should see him on the basketball court. MDJ Chief Photographer **Barry Shapiro** played some hoops with



Philip Goldstein